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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/RA, INL

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SUBJECT: 2007-08 INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL STRATEGY REPORT
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES: DRUGS AND CHEMICAL CONTROL

REF: STATE 136782

I. Summary

Although not a narcotics-producing country, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is believed to be a transshipment point for traffickers moving illegal drugs from major drug production and transit countries, including Afghanistan and Pakistan. Frequent reports of seizures of illegal drugs in the UAE over the past few years underscore this conclusion. Most seizures have been hashish. There are several factors that render the UAE a way station, including its proximity to major drug cultivation regions in Southwest Asia and a long (700 kilometer) coastline. High volumes of shipping render UAE ports vulnerable to exploitation by narcotics traffickers. There are numerous reports that drugs leave Iran and Pakistan by vessel and move to the UAE, among other destinations, in the Gulf. In September 2005, the U.S. DEA established a country office in the UAE to enhance cooperation with UAE law enforcement authorities. The UAE is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention. In 2007, the UAE was re-elected as the Asian region representative to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND). The UAE ratified the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime on May 7, 2007.

II. Status of Country

A major regional financial center and hub for commercial shipping and trade, the UAE is a transshipment point for illegal narcotics from the drug-cultivating regions of Southwest Asia, to Europe, to Africa, and less significantly, to the United States, as well as a key location for narcotics money laundering by international drug traffickers -- including possibly from South America -- in the Gulf region. Western Europe is the principal market for these drugs, and Africa is becoming an increasingly prominent secondary market. Factors that contribute to the role of the UAE as a transshipment point are the emergence of Dubai and Sharjah as regional centers in the transportation of passengers and cargo, a porous land border with Oman, an easily accessible commercial banking system, and the fact that a number of ports in the UAE have free trade zones where transshipped cargo is not usually subjected to the same inspection as goods that enter the country.

III. Country Actions Against Drugs in 2007

Policy Initiatives. The UAE continued to advance its national drug strategy based on intensifying security at the country's air and sea ports and patrols along the coastline, reducing demand for illegal drugs through educational campaigns, enforcing harsh penalties for trafficking, and establishing programs to rehabilitate drug addicts.

The UAE's Federal Supreme Court ruled in 2003 that authorities needed proof that drug use occurred in the UAE before it could prosecute users. A positive blood test is considered evidence of consumption, but not evidence of where the consumption took place. On March 29, 2007, Dubai Police and the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) signed a USD 1.2 million project, fully funded by the Dubai Police, to combat drug abuse and drug trafficking in the UAE and in the region. The project will last for two and a half years (starting from April 2007). The project agreement has four elements. Dubai Police will play a leading role in reversing increased drug trafficking and drug abuse among young people in the UAE and other states of the region. UNODC will help upgrade the Dubai Police Training Centre into a center of excellence for the region-wide transfer of knowledge and the training of law

enforcement staff to ensure that they have the skills needed to cope with an increased influx of narcotic drugs. UNODC will assist Dubai and the UAE as a whole to develop a coordinated national action plan on drug demand reduction. UNODC will help develop and implement national drug abuse and HIV/AIDS prevention modules for schools and universities to address young people in a way that suits the culture of the Gulf region.

In September of 2005, the UN established a sub-office on Drugs and Crime in Dubai. The UAE Government funded the estimated \$3 million cost of the office and contributed an additional \$50,000 to the UN counter-narcotics program.

Law Enforcement Efforts. According to published remarks of the Director of Drugs Department of the Ministry of Interior, speaking at the Arab Symposium for Planning and Strategic Cooperation in Drug Combating, the UAE arrested 3,869 persons in drug cases from 2006 to August 2007. During that timeframe, the total amount of seized hashish was 1,286 kg, heroin 240 kg, opium 13 kg, and approximately three million "drug tablets." Abu Dhabi Police reported 162 arrests in the first half of 2007. Most of the arrestees were Iranians, Pakistanis, Africans and UAE nationals. By way of example, in August, 2007, Dubai customs inspectors stopped 33 smuggling attempts of hashish, opium, marijuana and other narcotic drugs.

A 1995 law stipulates capital punishment as the penalty for drug trafficking. Sentences usually are commuted to imprisonment. In March 2007, the Sharjah Islamic Sharia Court handed a death sentence to an Iranian drug trafficker who smuggled 267 kg of hashish into the UAE. In April 2007, the Ajman Court sentenced a drug trafficker to life imprisonment. UAE authorities continue to take seriously their responsibility to interdict drug smuggling and distribution. UAE authorities continue to cooperate with other countries to stop trafficking. In June 2007, the UAE Ambassador to Pakistan, Ali Al Shamsi, announced to the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) that the UAE already had a drug liaison office in Islamabad and was in the

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process of establishing another one in Karachi. Al Shamsi stated the UAE also shares information with other GCC countries to check the flow of narcotics.

Corruption. The government of the UAE as a matter of policy does not encourage or facilitate illicit production or distribution of narcotic or psychotropic drugs or other controlled substances or the laundering of proceeds from drug transactions. Senior officials are not known to engage in or to facilitate illicit production of these drugs or to profit from the laundering of proceeds from drug transactions. There is no evidence that corruption -- including narcotics related corruption -- of public officials is a systemic problem.

Agreements and Treaties. The UAE is party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention, the 1961 UN Single Convention as amended by the 1972 Protocol, and the 1988 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances. The UAE signed the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime on December 9, 2002 and ratified it on May 7, 2007. The UAE is a party to the UN Convention against Corruption. In September 2007, the UAE and Russia signed an agreement for cooperation in the field of counterterrorism, prevention of organized crimes, money laundering and other forms of dangerous crimes. The agreement, among other provisions, calls for cooperation to prevent trafficking in narcotic drugs.

Cultivation/Production. There is no evidence of any major drug cultivation and/or production in the UAE. Published records show that there were two cases of "planting" drugs in the Emirate of Ras Al-Khaimah in 2004, with a total of three persons arrested.

Drug Flow/Transit. High volumes of shipping and investment development opportunities render the UAE vulnerable to exploitation by narcotics traffickers and narcotics money laundering. The UAE -- and Dubai, in particular -- is a major regional transportation, financial, and shipping hub. Narcotics smuggling from South and Southwest Asia continues to Europe and Africa and to a significantly lesser degree to the United States via the UAE. Hashish, heroin, and opium shipments originate in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran and are smuggled in cargo containers, via small vessels and powerboats, and/or sent overland via Oman. According to published figures, Iranians, Pakistanis, Afghanis and Africans made up the largest number of non-UAE nationals arrested in drug cases in 2007.

Recognizing the need for increased monitoring at its commercial

ports, airports, and borders, the UAE is making an effort to tighten inspections of cargo containers as well as passengers transiting the UAE. In December 2004, the Emirate of Dubai signed the Container Security Initiative (CSI) with the U.S. CSI inspectors arrived in Dubai in 2005 and are now inspecting containers destined for the U.S. Customs officials randomly search containers and follow-up leads on suspicious cargo.

Domestic Programs/Demand Reduction. A 2003 report noted that the majority of UAE drug users take their first doses abroad, primarily because of peer pressure. Statistics reveal that 75 percent of drug users in the UAE prefer hashish, 13 percent use heroin, while six percent use morphine. The report illustrates a clear relationship between drug abuse and level of education-75 percent of arrested drug users in 2002 were high school graduates, but only two percent were university graduates. While the data is a few years old, trends reported are still reflective of current societal patterns. The focus of the UAE's domestic program is to reduce demand through public awareness campaigns directed at young people.

The UAE has also established rehabilitation centers and several awareness programs. It has been issuing postage stamps to highlight the hazards of drugs as part of its awareness campaigns. Every year, the Ministry of Interior holds a high-profile "Drug Awareness Week" with exhibits prominently set up in all of the local shopping malls to coincide with International Anti- Narcotics Day on June 26 every year. The theme of the 2007 commemorations in Abu Dhabi was "Drugs, The Way To Peril, So Choose Your Way."

The UAE has trained volunteers to educate people about the risks of drug use. During 2007, Dubai police trained both Emirati volunteers in UAE and 30 volunteers from Kuwait.

UAE officials believe that adherence to Muslim religious morals and severe prison sentences imposed on individuals convicted of drug offenses effectively deter narcotics abuse. An affluent country, the UAE has established an extensive treatment and rehabilitation program for its citizens. There is a rehab center in Abu Dhabi, two in Dubai, and one each in Ajman and Sharjah for those identified as addicts. In accordance with federal law, UAE nationals who are addicted can present themselves to the police or a rehabilitation center and be exempted from criminal prosecution. Those nationals who do not turn themselves in to local authorities are referred to the legal system for prosecution. Third-country nationals or "guest workers" who make up approximately 80 percent of the population generally receive prison sentences upon conviction of narcotics offenses and are deported upon completing their sentences. Most UAE nationals arrested on drug charges are placed in one of the UAE's drug treatment programs. They undergo a two-year drug rehabilitation program, which includes family counseling/therapy.

IV. U.S. Policy Initiatives and Programs

Bilateral Cooperation. The DEA Administrator visited the UAE in July

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2005 to enhance counter-narcotics cooperation with the UAE. During her visit, she proposed, and the UAE accepted, establishing a DEA presence in the UAE to work closely with UAE authorities. The first DEA office was established in September 2005 in Dubai. DEA officials work with UAE authorities to combat both drug smuggling and drug related money laundering. Bilateral cooperation between U.S. law enforcement officials and UAE authorities has yet to achieve its potential, however, owing to the lack of a US-UAE Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT). Formal MLAT talks took place in February 2005 but no agreement was concluded. Since that time UAE increasingly has cited the absence of an MLAT as grounds for refusing assistance requested on drug and money laundering matters. UAE provides limited assistance on the basis of reciprocity, but has demonstrated a strong preference for formal judicial and law enforcement relationships. It also issued Law 39 of 2006, containing a set of procedural rules governing judicial assistance in criminal matters. UAE has recently negotiated MLATs with Australia, China, France, Iran, Italy, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

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